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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the need for aggressive innovation and to focus upon selected counseling approaches which appear to the author to have merit in meeting clients' needs. The need for different or innovative counseling is evident when one considers such problem areas as low achievement, the dropout rate, and increasing social disintegration as indicated by drug abuse, suicide, and other negative behaviors. The following problems should be dealt with: (1) Counselors must attempt to work with those who are most in need of assistance. Efforts should be made to staff counseling centers with counselors from a variety of cultural and personal backgrounds. Counselors should become aware of their biases and work toward overcoming them; (2) Counselors must attempt to communicate understanding. Interest and concern should be shown to clients; (3) Counselors should be accessible to students. Outreach centers and 'walk in' centers should be available; (4) Counselors should be available to adults; (5) Counseling should emphasize prevention. This may be done through exemplary programs, the use of play therapy or working to improve interpersonal skills; (6) Group counseling should be emphasized. The author concludes that counseling is less pervasive than he would like it to be. Present approaches should be improved through a balance between existing methods and innovative practices. (Author/WS)

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THE APPLICATION OF PROMISING COUNSELING APPROACHES IN VARIOUS EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

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PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

A dramatic cry for change and innovation in education generally, and in counseling specifically, has recently reverberated throughout the United States. This plea, while passing unheard by some, has been met with a variety of responses including passivity, clutching more strongly to tradition, and aggressive innovation.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight briefly the need for aggressive innovation and to focus upon selected counseling approaches which appear to me to have considerable merit in beginning to meet the needs of all children and youth. The approaches considered in this paper are those with which I am personally involved or in which I have a particular interest.

In labeling these approaches as innovative, I recognize the possibility that they may be "current practice" for some counselors. In addition the scope of this presentation does not permit the consideration of a vast number of programs and practices that are being developed in a variety of counseling settings throughout this country.

NEED FOR INNOVATIVE APPROACHES

While it is far easier to criticize existing counseling methods than it is to provide other rational alternatives, we need not look far to become painfully aware that new approaches must be forthcoming. As indicated in a recent report of the National Conference of Pupil Personnel Services (June, 1971), we are not meeting adequately the needs of our youth in a variety of ways. This problem is highlighted by such conditions as "low achievement of many students, large numbers of school dropouts, and the increasing social disintegration among young people as indicated by drug abuse, suicide, and other negative behavior."

PROBLEM--REACHING THOSE MOST IN NEED OF ASSISTANCE

It seems a strange paradox that counselors prefer to counsel those who really need it least. Although we hesitate to admit it, we have "preferred" client types. Hollingshead (1962), in his work, Social Class and Mental Illness, pointed out that psychiatrists in the New Haven, Connecticut area preferred working with patients in the upper classes. Their interviews were longer and more frequent than their lower-class counterparts. Although the civil rights activities of the past ten years may have helped to ease this problem somewhat, according to Thompson (1969), counselors still exhibit the "YAVIS" syndrome. That is, we prefer clients who are youthful, attractive, verbal, intelligent, and sensitive. Yet, clients with these attributes typically need our help least.

It has been suggested (Goldstein, 1962) that it may be futile to counsel a client whom you find unlikeable or for whom you hold low expectancies for outcome success. Other biases may include counselor-

client personality dissimilarity, sex preference, and minority biases. We also tend to avoid counseling underachievers and dropouts who are "evidences" of our failure.

Approaches

Multicultural Staffing

Strong efforts must be made to staff our counseling centers and guidance offices with counselors representing a variety of different cultural and personal backgrounds. In this way the typical white, middle-class biases are likely to be less dominant than at present. This effort is particularly urgent in urban settings.

Understanding and Eliminating Biases

Counselors in practice and training should study their attitudes and biases and work towards understanding and accepting individuals from various backgrounds. It is time that we appreciate the uniqueness of each individual. In addition, we must help the schools and colleges to permit and encourage individuals to live in vastly different ways. Not only must we understand and accept these differences, but we must exert our influence to change the environment in which we work to follow our pattern of understanding and acceptance of individual uniqueness.

PROBLEM--COMMUNICATION OF UNDERSTANDING

Counselors have failed to communicate to youth that they understand them. Young people are often sensitive regarding whether or not adults, including counselors, understand them or are interested in them as individuals and as a group. The increased "activity" of our youth during the middle and late 1960's caused an interesting variety of responses from counselors. Some retreated further into their administrative paperwork to avoid confrontation; some joined forces with the youth, minimized their dress and hair style differences, and "spoke their language"; while others defensively held their stance and widened the gap through lack of meaningful involvement.

Approaches

Showing Interest and Concern

Although we don't need to maintain the same hair styles, wear the same kinds of clothes, or utilize the same "in" language, we can in our own ways show our awareness of youth's needs and interests. We don't necessarily need to agree always with youth in order to communicate that we understand and care. We can narrow the gap by being concerned about the things they are concerned about. Here are a few specific ways in which we as counselors can show an interest in the things in which the students are interested:

1. Make ourselves available to the students in informal settings such as "bull sessions". Bring a "brown bag" to eat with

students to help create a personal, friendly atmosphere. Eating together provides warmth and affords a chance to exchange ideas.

2. Form group discussions in order for students and faculty to exchange ideas and concerns.
3. Be a support for the students as we meet with faculty, parents, administrators, and professional groups. By being for the students, we don't necessarily need to lose the support and esteem of our colleagues. We, instead, provide the needed contact between students and their community.
4. Use our senses more completely, particularly our ears. What are our youth saying? Are we really listening and responding to what they are feeling? Are we responding to them as humans or as objects?
5. Show our interest by involvement with social change, participation in citizenship building activities, and demonstration of our desires to avoid exploiting our universe. These efforts will bring us closer to our clients and will make identification with them an easier task. Without such identification, the communication gap becomes increasingly wider.

PROBLEM--ACCESSIBILITY TO STUDENTS

Counselors have remained "office-bound" and have been inaccessible to many persons who need them. The four walls of the counseling office have been our domain. Instead of venturing out into a possibly hostile, or at least questionable world, we have preferred to wait for the self-referrals or "typical" cases. We don't think we need to venture out into the real world because there is plenty of paper work and office details to justify our existence. We have enough troubles without going out in search for more.

Approaches

Outreach Centers

Counselors must leave the recluse and safety of the office to meet students on their grounds. Not only does this move emphasize our interest in the students and affirm our availability, it encourages contact and communication with those in need who are reluctant to go through the "normal" channels of formally approaching a counselor.

BYU's Program

College counseling centers lend themselves particularly well to the establishment of "outreach centers". As a fairly typical example, the Brigham Young University has expanded its physical counseling facilities in several directions to reach all students. That is, a full-time counselor has been assigned to occupy an office in the Student Union Building. In this location, he is available to students without appointment, has no secretary, and usually does not keep records of student contact. Students may "walk in" to chat, to seek advice or to "unload."

Another counselor from the Counseling Center is housed in the Student Health Center to work closely with the Medical Staff and to provide additional convenience to the students. Counseling Center office hours have been modified in order to make counseling services available to students on a twenty-four hour basis, seven days a week. At least one counselor is always available on call as the message from a client seeking his services is transmitted to him through an electronic device.

In order to reflect its expanded facilities and broadened concepts, the B.Y.U. Counseling Center recently changed its title to the Student Development Center. Like many other campus counseling offices, its staff has encouraged the establishment of other student-help services, such as the "Crisis Line," in which any person may call on the telephone at any hour to discuss his or her concern with an interested and understanding person. The Crisis Line staff is made up of professional counselors, counselor educators, graduate students, retired military personnel, housewives and other persons interested in helping others.

While these kinds of expanded counseling functions have not typically been seen at the high school level, the need for this kind of movement into the counseling concept at the secondary school level seems urgent if we are to meet the needs of all youth.

PROBLEM--AVAILABILITY TO ADULTS

Counselors have not been sufficiently available (or have not been perceived as being available) to non-student adults who work with students. To most teachers, parents and other adults, the counselor's work has involved dealing with troublesome students, testing and class scheduling. Few adults have viewed the counselor as a trained professional with specialized skills which could be called upon to assist other adults who work closely with youth. Unfortunately, the counselor himself has not viewed his role as such and has thus been unavailable, or at least highly inaccessible, for such activity.

Approaches

Family Counseling

During the past five or six years, we've talked about working more closely with parents and families in an effort to understand and deal with a student's non-school environment. While many efforts to develop programs involving parents and other family members have proven to be disappointing, a number of programs have met with success. One such program (Donigian and Giglio, 1971) involving the counseling program in Pennsylvania's Penn-Trafford School District, represents an innovative approach in combining elementary and secondary school counseling as family units are served. That is, counselors are assigned to work with family units on the basis of the geographic location of the home. Each of the eight counselors is responsible for about 250 families (about 500 students).

In addition to working with individual students and with groups, the program has a number of additional advantages. The counselor is better prepared to assist teachers because of his association with the family. This closeness to the family, termed the "belongingness factor" has provided a real identification of parents and students to their counselor. The counselor knows the student well and experiences him as a developing person. His contact assumes more of the preventative and less of the crisis function. The counselor also finds himself less involved and less committed in clerical and routine tasks as teachers and administrators view his pattern of activities in a less routinized schedule. His efforts can therefore focus upon the student, particularly in terms of articulation at critical times in the student's educational, vocational and personal development.

PROBLEM--EMPHASIZING PREVENTION

Counseling approaches have emphasized the crisis situation, and the behavior and attitude change of persons already disturbed or operating at lower levels of functioning.

The preventative aspects of counseling have received mere lip service by counselors generally. We have moved slowly and reluctantly into working with children at younger ages and have failed to concentrate on developing programs which would build confidence, and enhance self-esteem.

Approaches

An Exemplary Program in Moral Behavior--one example of an innovative approach to preventative counseling and guidance at the elementary level is found in an elementary school in Provo, Utah. The fifth grade teacher, Mr. Herbert Gilbert, works closely with the counselor, in a counselor-teacher team approach in developing and carrying out the program.

The program involves two periods per week in which the teacher and counselor present ficticious behavioral problems to the class. The students then become involved in analysing the problems and working together to find solutions. The problems are presented in a variety of ways including the unfinished story approach, role-playing and dramatization, and small group discussion. The problems are selected on the basis of relevancy with respect to age and content, and deal primarily with the following concepts: responsibility for and commitment to others, personal shortcomings, and difficulties experienced by others.

An atmosphere of safety, understanding and participation is created as such aspects as spelling, grammar and writing are deemphasized. The focus of the program is upon the

development of personal, social, ehtical and moral values. In this respect, some of the goals include the following: a) to focus the students' attention upon ethical problems common to those usually encountered by the students, b) to demonstrate to students that their problems are usually not so unique, c) to encourage thoughtful analysis and the development of insight into problems requiring ethical and moral judgement, d) to help students obtain a degree of experience in coping with a variety of ficticious problems in order that they may be more successful in dealing with problems that they may later face in reality. This type of program emphasizing the development of problem-solving skills and ethical behavior seems to offer promise as a preventative counseling activity.

Use of "Play" in Counseling--Play Therapy has been used rather widely with disturbed children, but has not been a common tool for the counselor in working with the normal child either in a diagnostic or preventative function. In addition to its therapeutic value in providing diagnostic information and desensitization of painful experiences, play is a natural form of expression for the child and can help the counselor to establish a healthy relationship.

As a prev tative tool in counseling with children, play provides a vari y of healthy and ego-enhancing experiences. It is pleasurable for he child, and pleasure is one of the greatest sources of ego strength d an antidote of deviant behavior. In addition, certain kinds of play such as building a model, engaging in sports or working with puzzles brings a sense of accomplishment and achievement which can provide the child with feelings of adequacy and mastery--feelings that are vital to the development of self-esteem. Also, play can provide gratification to certain desires and wishes which are impossible to achieve in reality. A child can feel the power and strength in play which are obtainable in no other way for him. Thus, he has legitimate outlets for hostile and aggressive feelings which may be a part of him, but which has own society does not permit him to release.

Counselors of young children will find that working with children and with teachers in a preventative effort with the use of play techniques will be worthy of further consideration.

Improving Interpersonal Skills--Recently a number of techniques have been developed for the purpose of improving general relationship skills. Among these methods are the programmed texts and encounter tapes such as those developed by the Human Development Institute (HDI).

The General Relationship Improvement Program is an HDI text consisting of ten sessions of about an hour's duration each. The program is designed for two people and is intended to expand the individual's ability to live and work more cooperatively and effectively with others, promote personal growth and development, and increase knowledge of

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basic principles of human relations.

The two persons take turns reading paragraphs from the book and answering questions, discussing incidents, role-playing and learning to relate to each other by responding to feelings as generated. These programs have proven to be effective in pointing out common causes of poor relationship development, and they focus upon understanding one's own feelings and the feelings of others and responding appropriately in interpersonal interaction.

The HDI Encounter tapes are designed for small groups interested in such areas as personal development, black/white relations, spiritual values, marriage enrichment, meaningful employment and vocational education. These programs stress honest communication, overcoming hang-ups, and breaking artificial barriers as the groups follow taped instructions. While some critics of these Encounter tapes have expressed concern that a professional group leader is not present to provide more control, the methods do seem to offer promising prospects for personal growth, particularly with responsible and serious participants.

PROBLEM--GROUP EMPHASIS

Counselors in school settings have been reluctant to venture from the one-to-one relationship and have thus failed to capitalize on the unique contributions of the use of groups.

Group work, sensitivity training, encounter groups, etc., have provided "hot press" for the public, have surged into the arena of public and professional attention, and have been variously loved and despised. As the spectacular and bizzare aspects of the group movement are now beginning to drift into obscurity, counselors must examine with renewed objectivity the proper place of the use of groups in their respective settings.

Approaches

B.Y.U.'s Academic Probation Program--Each semester, B.Y.U.'s Academic Standards Office sends a letter to all students who have been placed on academic probation. In this letter the student is encouraged to participate in a group counseling program, involving meeting two hours per week for ten weeks. He is further advised that his participation will be viewed most positively by the Academic Standards Committee when a decision is made regarding his continuation as a student.

The group co-leaders are usually advanced graduate students in counseling, psychology, youth leadership and other related fields. These leaders, under supervision, are encouraged to help the group focus upon the development of interpersonal skills and self-insight as opposed to the frequent tendency in such groups to concentrate primarily upon such specific areas as study skills, organization of time, and motivation. Considerable research with these groups supports

the notion that as a group member improves his self-concept and develops greater insight into his relationships with others, a number of aspects of his life become affected positively, including his academic achievement.

The groups typically meet for one and one half hours; then a half hour is spend as each co-leader meets individually with selected group members on a one-to-one basis. Although reported success and satisfaction varies considerably from group to group, possibly as a result of the composition and interest of group members and the effectiveness of group leaders, the general reaction has been so over-whelmingly positive, that the program has become a continuous and on-going activity.

Although other types of group counseling sessions are conducted on campus in the dormitories, the Counseling Center, and the Psychological Clinic; the probation program is by far the most extensive with twenty to forty groups meeting each semester. The "weightwatchers" group has gained in popularity and seems to provide a fairly safe climate for students, particularly females, to deal with their feelings of self-worth. Other groups, such as adult singles, vocationally uncertain, engaged, and married groups are popular.

Penn State's Human Relations Laboratory--Under the supervision of the director of Student Activities at Penn State the Human Relations Laboratory was organized to conduct programs in the following areas of learning: a) personal growth and development, b) coping with real life situations, and c) the accomplishment of goals. The basic approach is the laboratory method designed to help members of the entire university community achieve such interpersonal learnings as: a) increased self-insight and awareness, b) increased sensitivity to the behavior of others, c) awareness of group process, and d) increased skill in day-to-day functioning.

The leaders and co-leaders are drawn from the university community and receive specialized training under NTL staff supervision. The program has a professional orientation, implements safeguards against risks associated with the laboratory method, and provides a significant contribution to the educational experience of all interested students and faculty.

While more group activity has been seen at the college level and in industrial settings than in the elementary and even secondary school levels,high school counselors seem to be moving cautiously in the direction of increased group work. The unique contributions of group counseling suggests the desirability of counselors in school settings becoming familiar with and experienced in group procedures.

CONCLUSIONS

During this time of financial cutbacks and emphasis on relevancy and accountability in education, the impact of counseling is being seriously questioned by many both outside and within the educational enterprise. Although this impact of counseling is undoubtedly more pervasive than is commonly thought to be the case, it is far less pervasive than we would like it to be. Present approaches can and must be improved upon through a balance between existing methods and innovative practices.

To maintain stability in our practices and to retain confidence on the part of our clients, we must not assume that all that is current is also relevant. An eager counselor who plunges into current fads at the expense of proven methods may be viewed by clients, colleaues and supervisors as one who "fell for it". On the other hand, instead of burning up energy complaining about what can't be done, an innovative counselor is eager to experiment and to move in new directions as he uses his past experience to reshape the future. He knows himself, his clients' needs and his research. By beginning with the end in mind, he sets his priorities, determines what barriers exist in reaching his goals, and sets about to eliminate these barriers, possibly through institutional changes or breaking with tradition. Above all else, the primary objective of all current and innovative approaches should be the growth and development of our youth.

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